



The Phoenix Family Readiness Group Newsletter
1st Special Troops Battalion, 4th Infantry Division (M)
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Greetings from the Middle East!

The Phoenix Battalion has completed yet another month in Iraq and continues to serve the American and Iraqi people with pride. In this issue of the FRG letter, we will hear about the many Soldiers from the Renegades, Ravens, Nighthawks and Eagles. Please enjoy reading about our many successes and experiences, and know we are ever grateful for your support.

PHOENIX PROJECTS

Even without the hustle and bustle of a grand-opening during these past two weeks, the Soldiers of the projects cell remained very busy and productive. 1LT Aaron Render, SFC Jason Staub, SSG James Reid, SSG Aaron Griffing and our Iraqi engineers Bill and Hans have all dedicated countless hours to ensuring community projects for the Iraqi people are quickly processed and checked for quality control.



Above: 1LT Aaron Render pulls himself away from projects to take part in great training at a recent OPD (Officer Professional Development).

Due to their hard work, over thirty new projects will break ground in the next month all over the Raider area of operations. These new projects cover a wide array of infrastructure such as road improvements, medical clinic repairs and expansions, village generators, school repairs, water distribution projects, local governance centers, and fire and police stations. It is with great excitement that the STB enters July with over \$3,000,000 of new projects to supervise.

Projects PAO Manager – 2LT Jordan Maxcey

BRIGADE COMMO SHOP

Bravo Company is home to the 1st Brigade Communications Shop. SGT Real leads the Enhanced Position Location Reporting System (ELRS) section. SFC Beach leads the Brigade Commo section. Their leadership and technical expertise are relied upon throughout the battlefield for radio communications and vehicle tracking coverage. Their Soldiers further assist the Brigade through the installation and repair of radio equipment.

SGT Real is assisted by three top notch Soldiers: SPC Bray, SPC Hizon and SPC Esselman. They are experts in their field as EPLRS Network Managers and are among the brightest in the Signal community. They provide accurate and timely position data to commanders on the battlefield resulting in superior command and control capabilities. Their section operates 24 hours a day and assists maneuver elements by troubleshooting equipment and updating vital tracking platforms.

SFC Beach is assisted by several heavy hitters including PFC Campbell, SPC Faulkner, PFC Gray, PFC Hickey, PFC O'Laughlin, SPC Starks, SPC Shaneyfelt, SPC Milam and SGT Martinez. His section consists of the hardest working Soldiers in the Company. They maintain retransmission sites, participate in Tiger Team missions, which install and repair equipment and troubleshoot radio systems throughout the Brigade. These Soldiers single-handedly expanded the FM communications coverage throughout 1st Brigade's area of operation.



Above: Bravo Company Soldiers install equipment at a Patrol Base.

Soldiers and leaders throughout Camp Taji rely on the 1st Brigade Communications Shop for professional advice and assistance. Bravo Company's "Commo" Soldiers are combat multipliers for every element they support. Their ability to accomplish multiple complex tasks with minimal supervision makes them extremely valuable to the Signal Company.

RAVENS

With the fourth of July just a few days away, I am again dreading the loss of another holiday spent away from home. It seems that as a Soldier, I seem to miss all the best holidays because I am away. It has become a fact of life for me as it has for many Soldiers, and the fact that it occurs so often does not make it any easier to take. The Army does try

to make our holidays nice when we are deployed. I am sure that this 4th of July will be no different. We'll probably have steak, shrimp and lobster tails served at the dining facility. And we'll also probably have some type of free entertainment, like a music group on Camp Taji, if our mission allows us time to attend. So it should be a fun and relaxing day...if only we weren't deployed.

Although we are having a holiday this week, the mission never stops here in the wild, wild West. This upcoming week is a very busy one for the Company. The Thunderbird and Outcast platoons are both conducting lane validation training. The lane training is a great training exercise that the Brigade has put together to allow us to test our combat patrol tactics. Soldiers from across the Brigade evaluate the teams as they go through the lane and provide instant feedback on how to improve your techniques. In the end, the training enhances our preparedness as we continue to conduct missions in theatre. The Company will also promote 22 Soldiers in the upcoming week. This is a large portion of the company as it represents over 10% of the Soldiers assigned. Finally, to end the week, the Company will hold a change of command ceremony between CPT Reed and myself on the 7th of July.



Above: CPT Lou Castillo promotes SSG Aaron Griffing and SPC Kristopher Garcia at a recent promotion ceremony.

It will be a busy week indeed, but I have heard that if you stay busy the days seem to go by faster. I don't know if that's true or not, but it sounds good. And even though I am not

spending this holiday at home, I take heart in the fact that I am spending it here in Iraq doing the thing I joined the Army to do...being a Soldier.

Raven 6 – CPT Lou Castillo

NIGHTHAWK HUMINT

It has been a long while since many of us in the A Company HUMINT Platoon have seen the glowing faces of our own families. While there is no substitute, one positive experience we have here is bringing joy to the local Iraqi children while we are out on patrol. Whenever we go out, we always remember certain items for our safety and security, but we also bring along some Beanie Babies for the kids. It is great because they always ask for a present, which is usually something simple like a pen, football, or a piece of candy. While we certainly can not give up our military gear, we can part with the Beanie Babies and make some friends with the next generation of Iraqi citizens.



Above: Iraqi Children enjoy thier new beanie babies.

The Beanie Babies primarily come from a care package program started by Mrs. Robin Reese, a former high school classmate of CW3 Robert Campbell, from Ft. Myers, Florida. The program was started to foster a better relationship between our soldiers and the Iraqi children of the local farmers, construction workers, and business owners.

These children have few opportunities to receive gifts, but now their faces light up when they see us coming. We are always welcomed with the enthusiastic chorus of, “Mister Mister! Pencil! Football!”

Although some Beanie Babies have made their way into our offices to provide us with a much needed laugh, we ensure that we place them where they are most needed: in the hands of the children. These small stuffed animals have helped raise morale among the Iraqis and US soldiers alike. WO1 Tom Hofmann has appropriately identified this as bridging the cultural gap between the US Army and the local Iraqi citizens. As the Beanie Babies bring great joy to the children, for years to come they will always remember the precious gift given by a US Soldier known to them only as “Mister Mister”.

SPC Adam Posadas

A WORD FROM RENEGADE 6

Hello Renegade Families! I am glad to once again be bringing to you Renegade updates. Well, my first month in Command has been quite busy but I have enjoyed every minute of it. I want to give a special thanks to 1SG Jones for helping me out during the first month while 1SG Apolinario was serving as Command Sergeant Major. He did a great job helping the Renegades keep running. He is working in the S3 shop now and I am sure he is up to his neck in responsibilities and the craziness of learning his new job.



Above: SSG Dustin Howell briefs 2nd Squad, PSD prior to a mission.

The Renegades have been quite busy this month. SGT Martinez has been busy helping Bravo Company stand up one of our sister battalions in another camp, as they take over battle space. The PSD remains busy taking CSM Wells and COL Pasquarette around the Area of Operations (AO) in order to talk with Soldiers and people throughout the community and to ensure the Soldiers are doing the right thing and the local people are having their concerns addressed. I got a chance to ride out with 2nd Squad, PSD; led by SSG Dustin Howell, and got to see them in action. The Soldiers were highly disciplined and really seemed to enjoy their mission. We went out to the furthest western check point where CSM Wells ensured the Soldiers had everything they needed, and that the NCOs from 7-10 CAV were enforcing standards. I also got a chance to talk to some of the PSD Soldiers, like PFC Wayne Galliher. The checkpoint we were at was next to a canal and PFC Galliher stated that the water looked good enough to swim in. In-fact, he stated the first time he was here his platoon did take an occasional dip in the Tigris. Trust me, when you are wearing 50 pounds of Armor in 117 degree heat, most any water looks inviting.



Above: PFC Wayne Galliher looks at the inviting water and wishes he could take a dip in.

One of the most exiting events that happened this month was the Transition of Authority Ceremony to the 9th Iraqi Army. There was a huge ceremony that was attended by MG Thurman and the Iraqi Defense minister. I was able to attend the ceremony and watch the Renegades prepare for the Ceremony. COMMO was there to set up all the communication equipment required for the hour long ceremony. Public Affair's MAJ Olson and SSG Hunt led their crew, to include SPC Turner and SPC Salwoke, to cover the ceremony and get the information out to both the troops and the Iraqis.



Above: Iraqi Army Soldiers march during their recent Transfer of Authority Ceremony.

And the PSD, led by SFC Bullock, was there to ensure the safety and security of the people attending the Ceremony. This event was highly visible and was as much substance as it was ceremony. It represented the continuing progress the U.S. is making in transferring power and authority to the Iraqis. This is something that is important to all of us because the more responsibility the Iraqis have, the less our Soldiers will be needed in providing safety and security to Iraq. And the Renegades are leading the way in meeting this challenge. The Ceremony itself was a sight to see. The Iraqi Soldiers looked sharp, even in the 117 degree afternoon heat. T52s and T72s conducted a pass and review along with marching columns of soldiers. It was a sight I

realize very few Americans had ever seen, and the Renegades helped make it happen. After the ceremony, I talked with a few of the Iraqis and you could see the excitement in their eyes. After experiencing that, I could not help but realize the hard-work and sacrifice that so many of our Soldiers make is truly worth it. Members of the FRG, your husbands, wives, sons and daughters are true heroes, and they are accomplishing their mission, little by little, each day. I am proud to command such a fine group of people. Until next time, this is Renegade 6 out.

Renegade 6 - CPT Dan Walker



To Dare Is To Do

Larry A. Seaman
Command Sergeant Major
U.S. Army

John W. Cross
LTC, EN
Commanding